TESTIMONY

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

AB 382

Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman and Committee members.

I am Chris Jordan, County Veterans Service Officer in Walworth County and current Chair of the Legislative Committee of the CVSO Association of Wisconsin. I am here to offer brief testify in favor of AB 382.

About a year ago our Association members became aware of what we feel is an oversight in the law whereby reduced fee fishing licenses are not available to disabled veterans in receipt of VA non-service connected pension benefits. AB 382 will rectify that oversight.

Current law allows for a $7.00 reduced fee fishing license when one of two federal agencies has declared an individual is disabled and thus eligible for benefits. Those agencies are the Social Security Administration and Railroad Retirement Board. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) also has a program whereby low-income, war-time veterans can be declared disabled and unemployable, and thus eligible for benefits. This program is entitled non-service connected pension.

Very simply, we feel that disabled veterans in receipt of the VA pension benefit should have parity with other citizens who happen to be in receipt of Social Security or Railroad Retirement disability benefits. AB 382 ensures that parity.

I would like to reiterate that the VA pension program is for disabilities not related to military service. Current law allows a further reduced fee ($3.00) for certain veterans who have severe disabilities that are service-related. We feel it is appropriate to keep the distinction between the two groups – $7.00 fee for veterans declared disabled due to non-service connected disabilities and the current $3.00 fee for veterans severely disabled due to service-related disabilities. This bill keeps that distinction in place.

The CVSO Association of Wisconsin asks for your support of AB 382.

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